

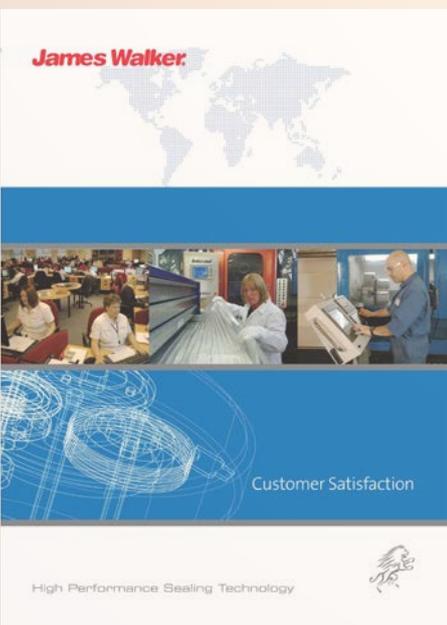
feedback

the importance of

FEEDING BACK TO CUSTOMERS AND STAFF

At TLF we strongly believe that feeding back survey results, to both staff and customers, is as vital to the survey process as the data collection itself. We cannot recommend enough that you feed back results. In fact, we strongly urge you to feed back results.

Whilst plenty of time is often allocated to planning and running a survey, it is fair to say that often little or no time is assigned to what, how and when results are going to be shared. Survey plans should always include this important stage.



It's easy to get distracted by the findings of the survey and either forget, or forgo, sharing results but that would be a mistake because it really can make an impact. Putting together a 'Feedback Plan' is time well spent.

FEEDING BACK TO STAFF

It is important to let staff know about the survey, not just the findings once the survey has finished but when it is happening and how it is progressing.

- It can be embarrassing for the organisation, and staff, if customers know about the survey but staff do not. In our experience it is not unheard of for staff to hear about a survey, for the first time, from customers. This is particularly embarrassing if the survey is designed to gather information about specific staff performance (for example, an account manager). Keep staff informed and let them know what is happening. Customers are often 'warmed up' prior to being approached to take part in a survey. Make it a point to 'warm up' staff too.
- When it comes to the results, staff are curious, they want to know what customers say – and if it tallies with what they are thinking themselves. It can motivate staff to discover that customers are satisfied with them and the organisation. Feedback from customers, in the form

of scores or comments can be a valuable tool. Staff can be reassured to discover that they understand customers and that their opinions match those of customers. Equally, customer disappointment or frustration can spur staff on to improve performance or, with support, do things differently.

- It motivates staff to know that their organisation cares about customers, has invested time and money in finding out what they think, and will be taking action in areas where customers want to see changes and improvements (it's about 'symbolism' to some extent). Any action may support staff by making their jobs easier. Also, satisfied customers can make work more enjoyable for staff with a customer facing role (and even improve staff attrition).
- Tailor findings to suit staff – present the survey results in a way that really hits the spot with staff. For example, some staff like data and numbers, others prefer words and respond to hearing or seeing customer comments. Use a range of approaches if necessary. For example, presentations, 1-2-1s, intranet etc. Give staff the opportunity to discuss, question and challenge the results. When staff understand they are often more comfortable with the findings.

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- Involving staff reaps benefits – they may play a key role in coming up with action plans and making improvements. They often come up with sensible, practical solutions to problems or improvements. As an added bonus staff very often come up with cheap ideas. Involving staff will gain their buy-in and make implementing changes easier.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

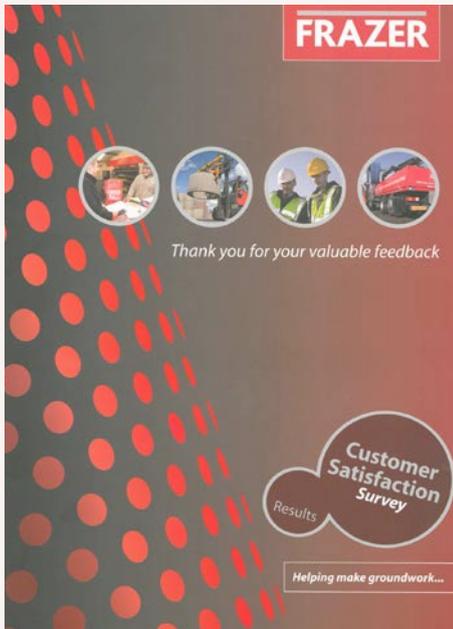
It is important to feed survey results back to customers and we do advocate this. However, the message and the method of delivery need to be considered.

It is important to feed the results of the survey back to customers:

- It is polite – customers have voluntarily given up their time to take part in the survey and they deserve not only to be thanked but to know what is happening with the information they gave you. If you can't go back with an action plan quickly, still communicate with customers (with 'holding' information) – and let them know you'll share full information with them at a later time. You must adhere to any dates you provide.
- Customers are often curious and actually want to know what is happening – they are also interested in finding out what other customers said. They genuinely want to know what the survey told you and how you have interpreted the feedback.
- It increases satisfaction – if you make changes based on the survey results, customers may not notice unless you tell them. It takes a long time for customers to register any improvements that you make. In order to speed up this process (and increase your satisfaction scores), it is essential to let customers know what you have done.
- Increasing customers' satisfaction in one area, by highlighting it, can benefit you as it leads to a halo effect where

customers automatically feel better about other things you do too. This is why we often recommend making a small number of big changes, that make a difference, rather than numerous incremental changes.

- It helps customers understand you. There may be things that you cannot improve. If you explain to customers what you can/can't do this will strengthen customers' bond with you. Customers may be more forgiving if they have a greater understanding of what is and isn't under your control.
- PR – sharing results is a good PR exercise. It brings you and your customers closer together which is never a bad thing! It may win you new customers.
- Sharing survey results encourages customers to take part when the survey runs again. They can see that, ultimately they will benefit by taking part.
- Be aware of the Market Research Society Code – when sharing feedback bear in mind that customers will have been promised a degree of anonymity in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct. Customer feedback is gathered only for research purposes and not for promotional reasons so individual scores should not be shared and customers should not be named.



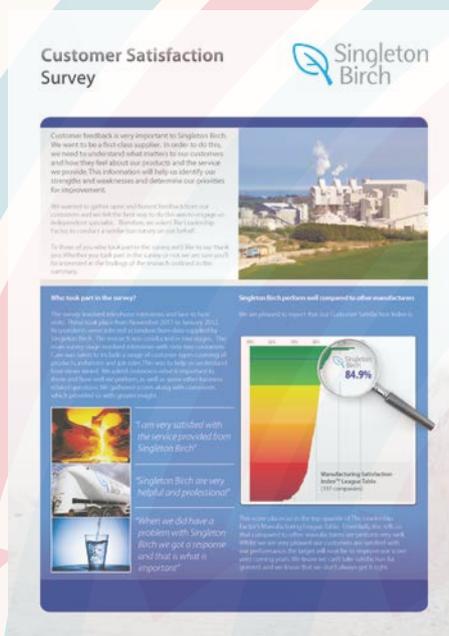
IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

When deciding the most effective way to feed back results, there are things to consider:

- How well do you actually perform? A customer who is not experiencing great service will be irritated if you promote how well you perform. There is nothing to be gained from fudging the results and claiming success where it doesn't exist.
- How much should you give away? Bear in mind your competitors will probably find out what you are telling customers. Consider what information is genuinely sensitive.
- What markets do you operate in? A business will feed results back to business customers (B2B) in a very different way from a business reporting back to consumers (B2C).
- Business-to-business markets are often smaller and competitors know more about each other. It is more difficult to move from one supplier to another.
- Business customers are more inclined to read detailed literature (but not always). This may include more detailed statistics.
- Some business customer may be extremely valuable. Sharing results personally can be effective.
- Consumers tend to respond to shorter, powerful messages.

- How should you share the message? A time poor, eco conscious customer who already receives too much paper – does not want to receive a wordy leaflet with irrelevant info.
- How honest should you be? Customers know what your weaknesses are, you can't pull the wool over their eyes. Decide how open (and honest) to be.
- Importance – we don't usually recommend sharing this as it is useful to competitors although you can refer to understanding what matters.
- Givens - customers are not going to be impressed if you tell them how accurately you process their transactions – you are supposed to do that anyway.

- Differentiators – customers are not going to be impressed by an organisation performing differentiators well, if you do not perform the basics well. For example, Amazon providing free delivery would mean little if the products were rarely in stock.
- Weaknesses/improvements – if your performance is weak, be careful how you share this with customers. You can tell them you recognise you perform better in some areas than others and you are working on this.
- Action – tell customers what action you are taking but do not tell customers you are taking action, if you are not.



HOW CAN YOU FEED RESULTS BACK TO CUSTOMERS?

There are a range of communication methods at your disposal to feed survey results/actions back to customers:

- 1) Leaflets / posters / letters
- 2) Newsletters
- 3) Internet & intranet (including videos and clips)
- 4) Word of mouth
- 5) Answer phone messages
- 6) Email signatures
- 7) People
- 8) Press releases
- 9) Social media
- 10) Events

• **Leaflets** – creating a feedback leaflet that you can send to customers is a useful way of feeding back results. It enables you to gather together the information you want to share in one place. You can control what you feed back and where you place the emphasis. You can print leaflets or add to your website for downloading.

• **Newsletters** – use your customers' newsletter as a way of sharing your survey results.

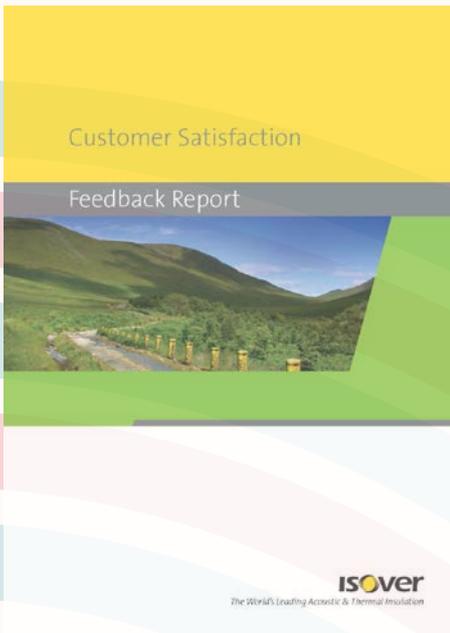
• **Internet & Intranet** (including videos and clips) – feedback can be shared with customers and staff efficiently using technology. The format can be as simple or complicated as you choose – from a strap line on the home page, a downloadable pdf to a short video recorded by the CEO (this is becoming more commonplace) and posted on YouTube. Everyday devices such as iPhones include surprisingly effective recording functions.

• **Posters** – if you have premises that are visited by customers you may decide to print posters promoting your survey results – emphasising what you are good at and changes you are making as a result of their feedback.

• **Word of mouth** – make sure that staff are aware of the survey results and use conversations with customers as a tool for spreading the word. For example, if a member of staff answers the phone quickly and a customer comments on this – staff can say 'thank you' e.g. "when we conducted our survey, customers told us we answered the phone quickly

– it's great you think that". Or, when a customer is unhappy "we appreciate we could be a bit better. It is something we are working hard to improve".

- **Answer machine messages** – you may have an answer phone message / holding message when customers call. This can be a useful tool for sharing information about results or action you are going to take.
- **Email signatures** – a corporate email signature can easily be modified to include a bi-line reminding customers of awards and successes.
- **In staff and customer areas, 'people'** – life size cut outs featuring positive customer comments can be a strong visual aid for sharing what customers have said in the course of the survey. Speech bubbles are useful and versatile.



- **Press releases** – if you are good at something, use a press release to let the world know (e.g. national press, trade organisations etc). Think carefully about where to send this – be selective and make sure it's appropriate. Whilst you can be selective with your subject matter, you do have to be honest and ensure that statistical declarations are correct. This includes referencing the data source.
- **Social media** – a short and poignant message can be an effective way of sharing news with customers. Social media is versatile, quick and a relatively cheap way of reaching customers.

- **Events** – road shows or open days provide a great opportunity for sharing information with customers. Piggy backing other company events can be cost-effective.

WHAT TO TELL CUSTOMERS:

You can tailor the message you feed back to customers. However, it is sensible to cover:

- **Why you did a survey** - who was interviewed, when and how (a brief outline of the 'mechanics'). This gives the findings of the survey credibility.
- **Summary of the findings** – you do not need to share a great detail but it makes sense to emphasise what customers are happy with ('we were delighted that you told us you are happy with our staff') and acknowledge your weaknesses ('we recognise there are some areas where we could be better'). Be sure to tailor your message to the audience – some customers will expect technical details and data, others will prefer a more abbreviated approach.
- **Action you are going to take** – customers want to know what is happening based on their feedback. Be sure to tell customers what you have done and what you are going to do. Some things take longer than others and it might be sensible to give timelines in some cases (as long as you are able to meet them, that is). It might also be relevant to explain what you can't do.
- **When you are going to survey again** - customers are more likely to take part. Response rates should improve.

KEY POINTS:

- Feed back results as soon as possible after the survey has finished. Results need to be shared whilst they are relevant.
- Feed results back to all customers, not just those who took part in the survey. Why should survey action only be shared with customers who took part? It makes sense to let all your customers know that you take their feedback seriously and that you are taking action. This approach will encourage customers who refused to take part, or who have hesitated to give feedback, confidence in the survey process and your organisation.

- Be honest and if you say you are taking action make sure you do. Hollow promises will reflect badly on your organisation. However, actually taking action will prove to customers that you listen to what they tell you. It may also help you hold on to customers who were considering removing their business.

FEEDBACK PLAN:

Essentially, your feedback plan needs to take into account:

- Who are you going to share feedback with? Ideally, you will feed back to all customers.
- What action are you going to take? The key message is that you are taking action based on feedback.
- What are you going to tell customers? You need to be honest and positive.
- How are you going to reach customers? You will need to employ a range of techniques.
- When are you going to tell customers? Aim to share the findings soon after the survey.

Talk to your Client Manager about how TLF can help you plan your feedback campaign.



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